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*valorem* duty on all modern paintings and sculptures that are imported for private use or sale.

PETITION FROM UNION LEAGUE CLUB.

We therefore respectfully ask for the enactment of a law that will admit Works of Art, such as Paintings, Sculpture, Engravings, Casts, Models, Antiques and Photographs of such objects, free of duty.

BASTIEN LEPAGE.

BASTIEN LEPAGE, whose early death at the age of thirty-six occurred in December, was one of the strongest individualities among the younger French Artists. He was a Government clerk at Dansvilliers, but at nineteen threw up office work to follow the bent of his talent, and entered Cabanel's *atelier* in Paris, and in 1875 began to exhibit in the Salon. His line was portraiture and scenes of rustic life, which were portraiture also, not only of people, but of places. A searching literalism, held in check by and subordinated to definite artistic aims, extraordinarily vivid actuality, forced sometimes to an imitative point that suggested the use of the camera, and deliberate exclusion of not only cheap allurements, but of that prerogative of selection and elimination which the disciples of the ideal hold dear; these were some characteristic qualities of his art. We have seen nearly all his chief pictures in England: "The Wood Cutter," "Rustic Courtship," "The Beggar," "Pas Méche," "The Haymakers," "My Parents," "Portrait of my Grandfather," "Sarah Bernhardt," while the curious little portraits of the "Prince of Wales," and of "A Gentleman," hung in the Royal Academy, indicated more expressly the close technique and clinging epitome of characteristics which, perhaps, are found at strongest pitch in the portrait of "Albert Wolf," editor of the Paris *Figaro*.

It is said that his sitters' patience was severely taxed by the numberless poses demanded by the Artist, and that the portrait of Victor Hugo never reached completion owing to the poet's inadequate endurance on this head. Lepage has been accused of using his undeniable power to depict, by choice, only the sordid and repulsive side of the rustic life which he studied on his hard-won holidays from Paris. His village lover is a lout who picks his nails, and is not too clean; his haymakers look stupid from overmuch cider, as well as from labor in the hot sun; his old woodsman is pinched in soul by poverty and toil. Yet it must be allowed that there was pathos beneath the pain of these things, and beauty and freshness in the painting of out-door nature which enframed and enforced them.

M. Lepage may have mistaken the mission of art and missed his way in company with some of the realistic writers of the day, but, at all events, his teaching was pure in its honesty, and his work was the genuine and laborious outcome of a strong artistic individuality. At the recently opened galleries, called the Salon Parisien, in Bond Street, the last work of the Artist, left unfinished upon the easel, has been in view. It is a vigorous study of an chimney-sweep, grimy from work, eating his dinner in a wretched room, with cat and kitten for company.—*The Portfolio*.

A FRENCH ART PROTECTIVE SOCIETY.

THE *Chronique des Arts* gives the following extracts from the prospectus of a *Société Protectrice de l'Art Française* which it is proposed to organize in Paris. "A terrible crisis exists at this moment among all industries, and is felt most severely by the painters and the picture business. Independently of the general reasons for this great depression, the evil is also due to some particular causes that are well known."

"The exaggeration of the value of the works of certain masters.

"The erroneous belief that these works are alone worthy of a place in collections."

"The alarming increase of the sale of fraudulent pictures."

"The works of Corot, Diaz, Rousseau, Daubigny, Troyon and Millet, formerly so despised, have suddenly been sought to the exclusion of the works of all others, and have in a short time increased tenfold in value. Strange enough, the more the prices increase, the more the pictures advance in the favor of the public. There will soon be none of them for sale. Unscrupulous fabricators have profited by the rarity of these pictures and the blindness of the majority of amateurs, and have reaped easy and lucrative harvests. They have manufactured by wholesale these imitations and copies, with which they have inundated the whole world, confining themselves mainly to the counterfeiting of the works of the lamented masters who are no longer here to defend themselves."

"In order to meet this situation, to restore confidence and to give to the art business its former importance, it is necessary to destroy the business of these forgers; to prove to amateurs that it is easy to authenticate the originality of modern pictures; to persuade them not to attach themselves alone to the works of masters who are no more; to convince them, in fine, that we have other great painters whose reputation will equal that of their predecessors and whose genius they will regret later not having appreciated."

"Its first act will be to establish a bureau of experts which amateurs can consult in perfect confidence, and obtain the most reliable information. All modern pictures submitted to examination and recognized as original, will be stamped with a seal, which will be evidence of their authenticity."

"These pictures will at the same time be catalogued upon special registers which can be consulted afterwards."

"A great number of artists have already expressed the desire to have all of their recent pictures recorded in these books, and many of our collectors intend to have similar inventories made of their art treasures. If this example is followed, we will have in a few years the most valuable documents of modern French art."

In view of this "terrible crisis," it would appear that something should be done, but in the matter of making the Society's seal positive evidence of authenticity, we fear that the counterfeiters would at once rise to the occasion, and that it would then be necessary to have another seal to prove the genuineness of the seal of the Society, and later a third seal to authenticate the second, and so on *ad infinitum*.

—Ed.